REVISING THE COLLEGE-LEVEL SOCIAL SCIENCES CONCENTRATION

GOVERNMENTAL ORIENTATIONS

Québec

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Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Science
Direction générale de l'enseignement collégial

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INTRODUCTION

Much thought and discussion have gone into revising and renewing the college-level Social Sciences concentration. The orientations set by the Minister of Enseignement supérieur et de la Science are the starting point for this revision process.

This document looks at the history of the Social Sciences programme as well as its inherent problems. It also outlines the orientations, objectives and organizational rules for a new Social Sciences programme and proposes the stages for carrying out the necessary changes.

In addition to outlining the new programme, the orientations determined by the Minister also help to establish an action plan for the educators of the many college students who will be going on to university.

1. PROGRAMME HISTORY

The temporary "Régime pédagogique" used in the CEGEPs in 1967 gave a general outline of pre-university courses based on the following principles: a student choses 3 or 4 disciplines from a group of disciplines which make-up a concentration. Students have a wide selection in the Social Sciences concentration: they may choose 12 courses from 15 different disciplines in order to comply with selection criteria. Furthermore, university admission standards outline the necessary prerequisites for acceptance in the various university programmes.

Article 14 of the Regulation Respecting the Basis of College Organization, adopted in 1984, specifies that all concentrations must include a set of courses which are chosen by the Minister, in addition to the courses chosen by the teaching establishments. The adoption of this new rule made it necessary to revise the college Social Sciences programme. The revision process began in 1978, following a number of proposals to improve the programme.

Both colleges and universities were consulted as to the proposed solutions and a consensus was reached regarding the fundamental orientations of the Social Sciences programme.

II. THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

There is much flexibility in the present method of organizing college-level studies in the Social Sciences. This caused many different academic orientations in a study programme which accounts for 25% of the student body. The progressive erosion of university-admission standards coupled with the great variety of courses available in the disciplines which make-up the Social Sciences concentration, contributed to the breakdown of the pre-university-college-level Social Sciences programme. In addition to these pedagogical problems, the Social Sciences programme has been devalued by the fact that it is not considered as difficult as other college programmes.

In summary, the lack of a formal framework has caused many problems within the Social Sciences concentration. A structured and coherent programme must be organized, with emphasis on quality, in order to remedy these problems.

The proposed reform aims to create a formal framework by first establishing the orientations which will guide the revision of the Social Sciences programme.

III GOVERNMENTAL ORIENTATIONS

The following orientations will be the guidelines for revising the Social Sciences concentration at the college level:

1. Establish a programme framework based on courses which share a common-programme objective and ensure that it applies to all Social Sciences students at the college level;

2. Emphasize the teaching of basic knowledge and the methodology used by the Social Sciences;

3. Define the general objectives which apply to all of the Social Sciences courses;

4. Maintain an equilibrium between encouraging the exploration of knowledge in the Social Sciences and acquiring a more specialized instruction in one of the disciplines of the Social Sciences;

5. Maintain the flexibility required for fulfilling students' individual needs with respect to their professional orientation and the demands of preparation for university;

6. Encourage progressive learning;

7. After careful revision, reduce the number of Social Sciences courses given at the college level, in order to satisfy the requirements of a revised basic education programme.

The orientations of the Social Sciences concentration are a fundamental part of the teaching objectives, the general principles for study organization and the organizational rules.

1. PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

The teaching objectives of the Social Sciences programme are based on four (4) main principles:

1.1 developing intellectual rigour;

1.2 grouping courses together with a shared-programme objective;

1.3 learning the basic concepts and methodology of the Social Sciences;

1.4 acquiring a basic knowledge in a few disciplines of the Social Sciences.

2. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE OF STUDY ORGANIZATION

In order to fulfil the general objectives of the Social Sciences programme and respect its orientations, its framework will be based on the principle that **any science can be defined by its purpose and its methods.**

With this principle in mind, the study of the methodology of the Social Sciences will be accompanied by a basic instruction in quantitative methods. The teaching of methodology will be shared by the Social Sciences disciplines and the Mathematics discipline.

3. THE ORGANIZATIONAL RULES FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES CONCENTRATION

The Regulation Respecting the Basis of College Organization dictates that concentrations must be made-up of a group of courses chosen by the Minister as well as courses chosen by the college. The Social Sciences concentration will be increased to twenty-eight (28) credits. The group of courses selected by the Minister will account for 20 of these credits, with the remaining eight (8) chosen by the institution. The organizational rules will determine the colleges' choice of courses for their concentration.

Rules governing the courses selected by the Minister

1. Students must select 16 credits from the group of courses selected by the Minister. These courses cover the study of Man from three different angles common to the Social Sciences:

. the individual (development and behaviour)
. the society (the structures and the workings of society)
. the world (international phenomena)

This group of courses includes the following Social Sciences disciplines: Geography, History, Ancient Civilizations, Psychology, Religious Sciences, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Sociology and Administration.

2. Furthermore, students must obtain two (2) credits in the methodology of the Social Sciences and two (2) credits in quantitative methods.

Rules applicable to the entire concentration

1. Students must limit their choice to a maximum of (8) credits in any one discipline.

2. Students must take courses from a total of at least four (4), but no more than six (6) Social Sciences disciplines.

Selection criteria for courses chosen by the teaching establishments

Courses chosen by the college must contribute to achieving the general programme objectives. They will be required to meet organizational rules applicable to the Social Sciences concentration as a whole.

In addition to the Social Sciences discipline, this group of courses will include the following disciplines: Mathematics, Philosophy, Computer Science, English and French as a Second Language.

4. CHART OF REVISED PROGRAMME

REVISED SOCIAL SCIENCES PROGRAMME
- 28 credits in the concentration -

Objectives: logical rigour, shared-programme objectives, methodology and concepts of the Social Sciences, basic disciplinary education.

Courses selected by the Minister:

- 2 credits (1 course) compulsory in methodology of the Social Sciences;
- 2 credits (1 course) compulsory in quantitative methods applied to the Social Sciences.

- 16 credits (8 courses) dealing with the study of Man, with respect to: the individual, society, the world;

- courses are chosen from a limited selection of courses which meet programme objectives as well as the requirements of the courses selected by the Minister, with regard to the Social Sciences;

- these Social Sciences credits are restricted to the following 10 disciplines:

  Geography, History, Ancient Civilizations, Psychology, Religious Sciences, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Sociology and Administration.

Group of courses chosen by the teaching institution

- 8 credits (4 courses) selected from a list of courses which meet programme objectives from the following disciplines, in addition to the Social Sciences:

- Mathematics
- Philosophy
- Computer Science
- English as a Second Language
- French as a Second Language.

All Social Sciences courses will be revised with additional emphasis placed on basic education.

Students should limit their choice to a maximum of eight (8) credits (4 courses) per discipline.

Students must select courses from a total of at least four (4), but no more than six (6) Social Sciences disciplines, not including the compulsory methodology courses which are considered extra-disciplinary.

IV UPCOMING STAGES

The second stage of the revision process for the Social Sciences programme will begin with the elaboration of the courses selected by the Minister with respect to the programme objectives. At this time, all of the existing Social Sciences courses will be revised.

During this revision phase, impact studies will also be done and the modalities for applying the different elements of the proposed reform will be established.

This entire project will be submitted to colleges and universities to ensure their collaboration and encourage harmonious relations between the two teaching establishments. A decision will be made once the Conseil des collèges has expressed an opinion on the matter.

The revised Social Sciences programme should be in effect in colleges by the autumn of 1989.

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